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ABSTRACT

Two non-syntactic phenomena of Japanese reflexive binding by "zibun" ("self") are analyzed with respect to a pragmatic use condition on "zibun," a culture-specific condition, and the Maxim of Politeness (Fukada 1986). The first phenomenon is the tendency by native speakers of Japanese to avoid referring to an honored person with "zibun" when the honored person's behavior described in the sentence is considered inappropriate. The second is that a sentence with the reflexive pronoun "zibun" can be ambiguous. It is proposed that a pragmatic use condition on the reflexive pronoun "zibun" is that its use is an act that involves a speaker's attributing responsibility to the referent of the reflexive pronoun for action expressed by the predicate of a sentence. Also as a culture specific condition, it is proposed that in Japanese culture, to attribute responsibility to an honored person for an inappropriate act is face-threatening for the honored person. the first phenomenon can be explained by the combination of the use condition, the culture-specific condition, and the Maxim of Politeness. The second phenomenon can be explained by the fact that each speaker holds a different belief about what is, or what is not, "approrpriate" behavior. Contains 13 references. (Author/MSE)

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NON-GRAMMATICAL REFLEXIVE BINDING PHENOMENA: THE CASE OF JAPANESE

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ABSTRACT

Two non-syntactic phenomena of Japanese reflexive binding by *zibun* (which means 'self') are analyzed systematically with respect to a pragmatic use condition on *zibun*, a culture-specific condition, and the Maxim of Politeness (Fukada 1986) which is derived from Cooperative Principle (Grice 1975). The first phenomenon is the tendency by native speakers of Japanese to avoid referring to an honored person with *zibun* when the honored person's behavior described in the sentence is considered 'inappropriate'. For example, speakers try to avoid uttering (i) in which *zibun* refers to an honored person (a school principle) and his behavior is considered 'inappropriate' by the speaker (noticed by Inoue 1976).

(i) Koochoo-wa go-zibun-gaoshieteirassharu seito-to kekkon shitagatte-orareru.
School principle-Top Hon-self-Subj teaching student-with get married eager to-Hon

(Lit. The school principle is eager to get married to one of self's students) "The school principle is eager to get married to one of his students."

The second phenomenon is that a sentence with the reflexive pronoun *zibun* can be ambiguous. For example, example (ii) gives either the implicature that the speaker is blaming on the prince for his behavior, i.e., choosing his wife, or that the speaker is giving him credit for the same behavior.

(ii) Sono Nihon-no wakai kootaishi-wa zibun-no kisaki-o kimeta.
that Japanese-poss young prince -Top self-Poss princess-Obj decided

(Lit. The young crown prince decided himself's bride.)
"The young crown prince of Japan himself chose his wife."

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I propose as a pragmatic use condition on Japanese reflexive pronoun *Zibun* that the use of *zibun* is an act that involves a speaker's attributing responsibility to the referent of the reflexive pronoun for her action expressed by the predicate of a sentence. Also, as a culture-specific condition, I propose that in Japanese culture, to attribute responsibility to an honored person for her 'inappropriate' act is face threatening for the honored person. The first phenomena can be explained by the combination of the use condition, the cultural-specific condition, and Maxim of Politeness which states "Be polite". The second phenomena can be explained by the fact that each speaker holds different belief about what is 'appropriate' behavior and what is not.

INTRODUCTION

In previous literature, conditions for what kind of NP can be the antecedent of *zibun* (Japanese reflexive pronoun meaning 'self' which does not show any inflection for person and number) or what kind of NP *zibun* can bind (condition on *zibun*-binding) have been intensively analyzed syntactically.[1] An exception for such syntactic analyses was observed (Inoue 1976) but was never be analyzed systematically.[2] I will account for two such "exceptions" systematically by using pragmatic notions. These two phenomena (one is from Inoue (1976), and one originates in this paper) cannot be accounted for syntactically since they are related to politeness phenomena or speaker's attitude. One phenomenon is that native Japanese speakers tend to avoid referring to an honored person with *zibun* when they are referring to the honored person for her 'inappropriate' behavior. For example, some speakers avoid referring to a school principle (male, here), *koochoo* in example (1), with *zibun* when they are referring to him for his 'inappropriate' behavior, which is exactly the case in example (1)[3]. Here, the 'inappropriate behavior' is his showing romantic emotion towards one of his students. Therefore, they will avoid uttering (1a), and instead, they will choose to utter (1b) in which *zibun* is not used.[4]

(1) a. Koochoo-wa go-zibun-ga oshieteirassharu seito-to kekkon shitagatte-orareru.
School principle-Top Hon[5]-self-Subj teaching student-with get married eager to-Hon

(Lit. The school principle is eager to get married to one of self's students)
'The school principle is eager to get married to one of his students.'

b. Koochoo-wa [ø] oshieteirassharu seito-to kekkon shitagatte-orareru.
school principle-Top teaching student -with get married eager to-Hon

(Lit. The school principle is eager to get married to one of [ø] students)
'The school principle is eager to get married to one of his students.'

The other phenomenon which syntax cannot explain is that a sentence with a reflexive pronoun *zibun* can give two opposite connotations: the speaker's positive attitude toward the

action of the referent of *zibun* or her negative attitude toward the action of the referent of *zibun*. For example, example (2) could mean either that the speaker was irritated that Taroo[6] kept talking about himself, or it also could mean that the speaker was pleased for the same reason.

(2) Taroo-wa zibun-no koto-o hanashi-tuzuke-ta.
Taroo-Top self-Poss[7] Comp-Obj tell - keep-Past

(Lit. Taroo kept talking himself 's story.)
'Taroo Kept telling his own story.'

To account for these non-grammatical phenomena, I propose that the use of the Japanese reflexive pronoun *zibun* is an act that involves a speaker's attributing responsibility to the referent of *zibun* for her action expressed by the predicate of a sentence (pragmatic use condition). The goal of this paper is to give systematic analyses for these two phenomena and to demonstrate how Grice's Cooperative Principle and Fukada's Maxim if Politeness contribute to the account.

HYPOTHESIS AND CONSTRAINT

In the previous section, the pragmatic use condition on *zibun* was proposed. I also propose the following cultural/social constraint against "attributing responsibility" (in the pragmatic use condition) to someone.

Constraint on Attribution of Responsibility (CAR): In Japanese culture, to attribute responsibility to an honored person for his/her inappropriate behavior is face threatening for the person who is being referred to by *zibun*.[8]

'Inappropriate behavior' is behavior which a speaker believes is socially or culturally inappropriate.[9]

ANALYSIS

Zibun-binding to an honored person

Inoue (1976) reported that native speakers try to avoid using a sentence with *zibun* when *zibun* refers to an honored person, i.e., they try to avoid referring to the person with *zibun* as in (3a), and prefer instead (3b), in which no such reference is made.[10] Namely, speakers intuitively judge that (3b) is a proper way to talk about a school principle (who is supposed to be highly respected in Japanese society), but (3a) is not. Inoue (1976) also reported that (3a) has an 'accusatory' connotation while (3b) does not.

(3) a. Koochoo-wa go-zibun-ga oshieteirassharu seito-to kekkon shitagatte- orareru
School principle-Top Hon-self-Subj teaching student-with get married eager to-Hon

(Lit. The school principle is eager to get married to one of self's students)
'The school principle is eager to get married to one of his students.'

b. Koochoo-wa [ø] oshieteirassharu seito-to kekkon shitagatte-orareru
school principle-Top teaching student -with get married eager to-Hon

(Lit. The school principle is eager to get married to one of [ø] students)
'The school principle is eager to get married to one of his students.'

There are two questions to be answered here. First, why do some people hesitate to use (3a)? Second, why does (3a) have an accusatory connotation as Inoue (1976) reported?

The first question is answered as follows. If a speaker believes that the act of showing romantic emotion to one's student is an inappropriate behavior for a school principle, and the speaker also considers that the school principle is a socially respected figure, referring to the school principle by *zibun* will imply that the speaker is attributing responsibility to an honored person for his inappropriate behavior. According to CAR, such use of *zibun* will be a face-threatening to the school principle. It follows from the Maxim of Politeness that Fukada (1986) derived from Grice's Cooperative Principle that a speaker will try to be polite by avoiding a face-threatening act, in this case, by avoiding using *zibun*.

Maxim of Politeness: Be as polite as required by culture-specific standards as to when and to whom to show respect and what counts as polite (p.27).

Hence, a speaker will try to avoid using (3a) in this context so as not to appear to be placing blame on an honored referent (i.e., in the context that the speaker believes that it is socially inappropriate for a school principle to show romantic emotion to his own student).

The second question, why (3a) has an accusatory connotation, is answered as follows. If the speaker is following the Maxim of Politeness (as she follows the CP in general) but intentionally did not avoid uttering (3a), the speaker's utterance of (3a) can be analyzed as an exploitation of the maxim. Namely, when (3a) is actually uttered, it seems that the speaker ignored the Maxim of Politeness. The speaker knows the attribution of responsibility to the honored referent (i.e. the school principle) for an 'inappropriate' behavior is a face-threatening action to him and it should be avoided in order to be polite. However, the speaker used *zibun* intentionally to imply something (e.g., an accusation that his action is not socially acceptable). Since a conversational implicature is always realized when some particular maxim appears to be violated[11], this should be the case for the 'accusatory' connotation that Inoue (1976) observed.

Just as we analyzed the accusatory connotation of (3a), my hypothesis and the Maxim of Politeness can explain the cynical connotation given by the utterance of (4).[12] The situation of the utterance is as follows. Hanako's teacher did not show up for the class. Later, she found out that the teacher could not remember the location of the classroom something that should be familiar to the teacher - and that's why he missed the class. Hanako is telling this to her friends.

(4) Sensei-ga go-zibun no kyooshitsu-o owasureni natta
teacher-Nom Hon-self-Poss classroom-Obj forgot -Hon

(Lit. Teacher forgot self's classroom.)
'The teacher forgot his classroom in which he always teaches.'

If the speaker is following the Maxim of Politeness, she could have avoided uttering the sentence (4) since she knows it is impolite to attribute responsibility to an honored person for his inappropriate behavior[13]. However, the speaker exploited the maxim by uttering (4), i.e., the Maxim of Politeness appears to be violated intentionally. This exploitation of the maxim explains for the implication that the speaker is being cynical toward the behavior of the teacher.

The hypothesis and the maxim also predict that a native speaker will not hesitate to utter the sentence (5) compare to example (3a). The situation of utterance for (5) is as follows. For some people, it is generous that superior people lend their own property to juniors. Here, the teacher generously lent his book for Hanako. Hanako is reporting this to her mother.

(5) Sensei-ga go-zibun no hon-o kashite-kuda-satta.
teacher-Top Hon-self-Poss book-Obj borrow-let me-Hon

(Lit. The teacher let me borrow self's book.)
'The teacher let me borrow his own book.'

Example (5) illustrates that the referent's behavior was evaluated as 'good' (thus, 'appropriate') by the speaker but not as 'inappropriate'. Since the Maxim of Politeness does not prohibit the attribution of responsibility to a superior's 'appropriate behavior', the speaker will refer to the teacher with *zibun* without any problem.[14]

Hence, the hypothesis and the Maxim of Politeness explains reasonably why some native speakers try to avoid referring to an honored person with *zibun* in certain situations, namely, those situations in which the zibun refers an honored person, and the person's behavior which is described in the utterance is 'inappropriate'.

3.2 Opposite readings of a sentence with *zibun*.

The second non-syntactic phenomena is that a sentence with the reflexive pronoun *zibun* can be ambiguous. For example, example (6) can give contrasting implicatures—either that the speaker is blaming the prince for his behavior, i.e., choosing his wife, or that the speaker is giving credit for the same behavior.

(6) Sono Nihon-no wakai kootaishi-wa zibun-no kisaki-o kimeta.
that Japanese-poss young prince -Top self-Poss princess-Obj decided

(Lit. The young crown prince decided himself's bride.)
'The young crown prince of Japan himself chose his wife.'

How this ambiguity arises[15] can be explained as follows. In the utterance of (6), the speaker used *zibun* to implicate that she is attributing responsibility to the prince for his action of choosing his own wife. If we assume that the prince is honored by the speaker of (6),then the question need to be asked whether the responsibility has been attributed to his 'appropriate' behavior or 'inappropriate' behavior because the issue (prince's free will to choose his wife) is controversial, and also since the utterance will give different implicature depending on the answer to this question. Namely, if the speaker attributes responsibility to his 'inappropriate' behavior, the use of *zibun* will give some negative implicature, i.e, 'blaming; implicature as it is reported in the first paragraph of this section. Otherwise, it will give a positive implicature, i.e, 'praising' implicature as reported.[16] It is a tradition of the Japanese royal family that a bride of a crown prince is decided by special royal committee. Therefore, the prince cannot make any decision without the consent of the committee. Some people believe that the convention should be strictly followed. Therefore, that the ignored the committee and chose his wife by himself is 'inappropriate' in that sense. On the other hand, some people believe that the convention is an old, absurd, and inhuman rule. For them, the prince's behavior was brave for breaking a nonsensical rule from the past. Therefore, it is 'appropriate' behavior.

This question, i.e., whether the behavior of the referent of *zibun* is appropriate or not, was not asked when I analyzed (3a) (repeated here).

(3) a. Koochoo-wa go-zibun-ga oshieteirassharu seito-to kekkon shitagatte-orareru.
School principle-Top honorific-self-Subj teaching student-with get married eager to-Hon

(Lit. The school principle is eager to get married to one of self's students)
'The school principle is eager to get married to one of his students.'

I did not question whether the school principle's behavior (showing romantic emotion to one of his student) was appropriate or not. Rather, it was taken for granted that the behavior was 'inappropriate'. However, there is no empirical evidence to say every Japanese speaker believes the principle's behavior is 'inappropriate'. It is just that the belief is widely held among many people in the society.[17] Therefore, logically, there always exists a choice for a speaker to believe a behavior is 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate'. What each speaker believes about a behavior all depends on what each speaker believes about the behavior in question and what kind of attitude each one tries to project toward some social convention by showing what she believes.[18] Therefore, the ambiguity of example (6) is expected to arise since each person's belief about what the prince's marriage should be like varies.[19]

Since speakers' belief about the appropriateness of any behavior may differ, it is predicted that to communicate her intention successfully, a speaker needs to assume that her hearer shares the same belief, or at least the speaker needs to believe that the hearer recognizes the speaker's belief. In other words, since the speaker must speculate about the hearer's belief about the appropriateness of some behavior, it is predicted that there can be a miscommunication caused by the attribution of responsibility for that behavior. The following example illustrates this point.[20] A football player whom a lot of girls are always chasing has never asked a girl out (since girls come to him) and he was always proud of this fact. However, the time

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came when he wanted to go out with the most popular girl in his school. He thought that she would come to him like other girls did, but she never paid attention to him. As time passed, he got desperate and finally he asked her out. Then, a person who does not know about the player's pride in being so popular that he had never had asked a girl out uttered (7).[21] The football player was angry and the speaker did not know what he had done wrong.

(7) Koitsu-ga zibun-de kanojyo-o sassottanda -ze.
this guy-Nom self -by the girl-Obj asked out -you know

(Lit. This guy asked the girl out by self.)
'This guy asked her out, you know.'

The point is this; the speaker judged the referent's (=football player's) act as a 'good act' and intended to praise the football player's brave, manly action of asking out the most popular girl in his school. However, the football player, being the most popular boy in the school and being proud of it, was insulted; he interpreted the person's uttering of (7) as an offensive comment on his popularity, since attribution of responsibility implied (for the player) that even a popular guy like him could not get her attention without asking for it. In other words, the football player believed that the speaker of (7) judged his act as a 'bad' one and attributed responsibility to him for his 'shameful act'. Therefore, for the football player, the speaker's use of *zibun* in (7) was face-threatening.[22] The participants' views toward the action of asking a girl out are opposite. One thinks it is courageous, and the other thinks it is shameful.

These phenomena follow from my hypothesis automatically if we assume that the attribution of responsibility totally depends on the speaker's belief and that successful communication assumes that the speaker and the hearer share the same belief (mutual belief). However, the only way for a speaker to know her hearer's belief is by speculating. Therefore, there can sometimes be a misunderstanding caused by the attribution of responsibility, like the case shown above.

CONCLUSIONS

I showed that two non-grammatical phenomena of *zibun* binding can be systematically analyzed by a pragmatic use condition, a culture-specific constraint, and the Maxim of Politeness which has been derived from the Cooperative principle. They are summarized below.

Pragmatic use condition of Zibun: the use of the Japanese reflexive pronoun *zibun* is an act that involves a speaker's attributing responsibility to the referent of the reflexive pronoun for her action which is expressed by the predicate of a sentence.

Constraint on attribution of responsibility (CAR): In Japanese culture, to attribute responsibility to an honored person for his/her inappropriate behavior is face threatening for the person who is being referred to by *zibun*.

Maxim of Politeness: Be as polite as required by culture-specific standards as to when and to whom to show respect and what counts as polite.

The fact that native speakers tend to avoid refering to a honored person with *zibun* can be explained by speaker's tendency to follow the Maxim of Politeness. They avoid threatening the honored person's face by not referring to the person with *zibun*, since the use of *zibun* can attribute responsibility to the person for her 'inappropriate' behavior. At the same time, it has also been correctly predicted that native speakers would not avoid referring to the honored person with *zibun* when they are attributing responsibility to the person for her appropriate act since the Maxim of Politeness does not mention that the speaker's attributing responsibility to an honored person for her 'appropriate' act is a face threatening.

For the phenomena that a sentence with the reflexive pronoun *zibun* can be ambiguous, it was explained that when there are two contrasting beliefs, or attitudes, towards the 'appropriateness' of the behavior of the referent of *zibun*, it gives ambiguous implicature. As we saw in the prince's case (example (6)), if the matter is controversial, it tends to be easily interpreted ambiguously. If the behavior in question is not controversial, i.e., almost all member of society hold one same belief towards the 'appropriateness' of the behavior, there will be no ambiguity. The hypothesis also successfully explained the misunderstanding, or miscommunication which may occur through the use of *zibun*. The speaker and the hearer can have different beliefs about the appropriateness of the referent *zibun's* behavior, and therefore, the hearer may misinterpret the speaker's intention in uttering the sentence.

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THE AUTHOR

The author is a graduate student (ABD) of the Department of Linguistics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and currently working on her dissertation titled "Pragmatics and The Distribution of Japanese Reflexive Pronoun".

NOTES

[1] Kuroda 1965; Kuno 1973; N. A. McCawley 1976, among others.

[2] To account for other apparent counter examples to those syntactic analyses which are not discussed in this paper, Kameyama (1984) proposed a 'logophoric' analysis, and Iida (1990) proposed a 'perspective' analysis. In my current research (dissertation in progress), it seems to be possible that those examples and the examples which are discussed in this paper follow under one unified pragmatic condition.

[3] Here, two cultural notions are assumed. One is that in Japan, a person can be "honored" for his age, social status, and all sorts of achievements. However, the age factor seems to be placed above of all other factors. Also, some professions, e.g., professors, teachers, bosses tend to be placed higher in society. (Whom one honors depends on one's attitude toward the Japanese social system. If one wants to conform to the system by honoring old people, one can. If one wishes to show a different attitude, i.e., a radical, or non-traditional attitude toward the system, this is also possible. Convention is not an absolute rule to be followed, but it is a system which people can conform to or not as they wish. I just assumed that the speaker respects a teacher in the case of (1)). The other assumption is that that the teacher is behaving romantically toward one of his students is socially not acceptable, thus, 'inappropriate'.

[4] This phenomenon first described by Inoue (1976), pp.125-6 (modified).

[5] "Hon" stands for "honorific suffix" which is used to form the honorific form of the verb which refers to respected person's action.

[6] "Taroo" is a male first name used throughout this paper. "Hanako" which appears later is a female first name.

[7] "Poss" stands for "possessive case marker".

[8] A similar type of constraint to CAR has was speculated by Inoue (1976) as a native speaker's intuition.

[9] This notion of "inappropriate behavior" will be expanded later in section 3.2.

[10] Inoue (1976) does not claim that a sentence like (3a) can never be uttered. What she observed was native speakers' prevailing preference for uttering (3b) but not (3a) under a certain condition. Therefore, (3a) is a possible sentence.

[11] Grice shows that "as long as participants in a mutual enterprise such as a conversation each assume that the other is adhering to the Cooperative Principle, meanings that are conveyed without being said follow as inferences from the fact that some particular maxim appears to be being violated." (Green 1989, p.88)

[12] Example (4) is modified example from Inoue (1976), p.126.

[13] Here, "forgetting the location of the classroom" is not exactly a socially inappropriate behavior as it was defined in section 2, but rather it is inappropriate in the sense that it is 'shameful' for a teacher to be absent minded or stupid and forget his classroom. Thus, now the "inappropriate behavior" includes 'shameful' behaviors, too. This will be discussed more in detain in section 3.2.

[14] Example (5) has an implication which (5') below does not. (5) implies that the speaker is praising teacher's generous act of letting his student borrow his book. However, (5') is a neutral description of what the teacher did. Therefore, unless *zibun* is used to attribute responsibility for 'inappropriate' behavior, some 'positive' implicature seems to arise.

(5') Sensei-ga ø/kare-no hon-o kashite-kudasa-tta.
teacher-Subj ø he-Gen book-obj lend-let-Past

[15] We saw in the previous sections that the interpretation of *zibun* crucially involves the speaker's belief toward 'respectedness' of the referent and the 'appropriateness' of the referent's behavior. If the speaker is referring to the 'respected (or honored)' person with *zibun*, the 'appropriateness' of the referent's behavior was crucial to the decision as to whether she should use *zibun* or not. Here, the problem is not whether the speaker uses *zibun* or not. What is discussed here 1) is the fact that once *zibun* is used as in (6), the use couldtrigger ambiguous implicatures, and 2) how this ambiguity arises.

[16] See footnote 14 for an explanation for the positive implicature given by the use of *zibun*.

[17] Therefore, (3a) could be interpreted different way. If a speaker believes that the principle's action is 'appropriate' for some reason, (3a) will be not an accusation, but could be admiration since the speaker is not attributing a responsibility to his 'inappropriate' behavior, but for his 'appropriate' behavior (e.g., the speaker think that the school principle's behavior is romantic or something).

[18] The choice also depends on the speaker's world view. Matsumoto (1990) showed that one headline from a sports newspaper (a relative clause), shown below in (i), can be interpreted in two opposite ways according to the world-view of readers.

(i) [[Yaburu Kyojin]]
beat Giants

A group of baseball fans in the Tokyo area will take (a) as meaning; Giants beat (some team), while a group of fans in the Osaka area will take (a) meaning; Tigers (franchised in Osaka, and the team name is not overtly expressed in (a)) beat Giants (These two interpretations were possible because case markers are suppressible in news headlines.) Those two opposite interpretations of one headline demonstrate that there can be two groups whose world-view toward one topic is different. These two groups of fans have different world-views toward the power relationship between the Giants and Tigers-each group of fans holds its own desires and those desires are assumed to be held by all others. These different views (beliefs) allow each group to interpret (a) differently.

[19] Especially, the belief would differ between the Japanese elder generation and younger generation.

[20] The example was suggested to me by Georgia Green (personal communication.)

[21] The more detailed situation of the utterance (7) is this. This person heard the rumor that this football player asked the most popular girl out. He thought it was very manly behavior. One day the person was introduced to the football player in some party, and the person realized this is the person who asked out the girl. So, he told his friend who was with him that he is the (famous) guy who did that brave act.

[22] As I mentioned in a previous footnote, I need to expand the notion of 'bad act' a bit. The notion of 'bad act' could be expanded to include such an act that a speaker of an utterance believes that the act would throw mud (figuratively) on a referent's face for any reason.

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